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THE ISSUE OF MINE MAPS

Tuğçe TECİMER

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After the Second Karabakh War (2020), Azerbaijan re-established its sovereignty in its Armenian-occupied territories and suppressed the illegal armed groups in Karabakh with its Counter-Terror Operation on September 19th. Following these victories, the issue of mine-sweeping in the regions that Azerbaijan regained became a current issue.

As is known, Armenia placed a large number of mines in the region before the war and made a commitment to provide maps of the minefields to the Azerbaijani authorities in the agreements made after the war. However, according to the statements of Azerbaijani officials, the maps given by Armenia are substantially inaccurate[1], causing increasing expenditures of mine clearing operations, prolonging of the process, as well as many people, including civilians, losing their lives. Although the statements of the Azerbaijani authorities were previously denied by Pashinyan, they were confirmed by Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan. Mirzoyan not only confirmed the statements, but he also admitted that the mine-planting activities in the region continued even after the Second Karabakh War.[2]

Mines are weapons that can explode by pressure or even close proximity, regardless if the victim is a civilian or military. Moreover, they can remain underground for decades. The usage of these weapons pose danger, during times of ceasefires as well as peace. It is known that the majority of deaths caused by mines are civilians and occur during peacetime.[3] Additionally, mines make the land they are planted un-usable and prevent people from returning to their homes and lands, as in the case of Azerbaijan-Armenia. Therefore, these weapons are extremely dangerous and can cause unpredictable destruction, even during peacetime. The use, production and stockpiling of mines are prohibited by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (also known as the Ottawa Treaty), which was signed by 146 countries in order to reduce the risks that mines may pose worldwide.

Armenia's laying of mines on Azerbaijani territory also violates Article 3 of the Geneva

Convention on Human Rights.[4] Despite this, from 2020 to our current day, a total of 342 people have been victims of the mines planted by Armenia in disregard of international agreements. 65 people have lost their lives (50 of them civilians, 15 military personnel).[5]

All in all, Armenias refusal to share its maps of the mines it laid in the region in violation of international conventions, has led to the deaths of many innocent people. Armenia should immediately stop these obstructions that are costing human lives and put an end to this crime by sharing its mine maps with Azerbaijan.

*Photograph: *https://www.bbc.com/turkce/vert-fut-39366676*

[1] Azerbaijan Expects Armenia to Hand over Accurate Minefield Maps Soon: MP, NEWS.AZ, 6 February, 2024, https://news.az/news/azerbaijan-expects-armenia-to-hand-over-accurate-minefield-maps-soon-mp.

[2] Արարատ Միրզոյանը Հաստատեց Ականապատման Հարցերում Ադրբեջանական Պնդումները. 2023 Թվականին Փաշինյանը «Միջազգայնորեն» Հերքում Էր, 168, 24 January, 2024, https://168.am/2024/01/24/1987368.html?fbclid=IwAR37U1XTp7GiR70gKJJTVQ3zIV-eMZhjKfra-635zv4ZvqsWoNdLzBkTCPQ.

[3] Disarmament, United Nations, 6 February, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/disarmament.

[4]The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, (Accessed: 6 February 2024), https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf.

[5] Farid Zohrabov, International Support for Demining in Azerbaijan Keeps Limited - Demining Assoc. Chair, Trend News Agency, 5 February, 2024, https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/society/3857417.html.

About the Author :

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Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

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